Cooperative Banks (apart from the refinance support by NABARD), so as to enable availability of crop loans to the farmers at 7%.

(c) The Government has decided to provide interest subvention of 2% per annum to Public Sector Banks, Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) and Cooperative Banks on their lending from their own resources and refinance at concessional rate to Cooperative Banks and RRBs on their borrowings from NABARD. The subvention will continue for year 2007-08 also.

Apple under NAIS

3979. SHRIMATI VIPLOVE THAKUR : Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to bring apple under the National Agriculture Insurance Scheme; and

(b) if so, by when ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA) : (a) No, Sir. At present, there is no proposal for coverage of apple crop under National Agricultural Insurance Scheme (NAIS) under consideration of the Government.

(b) Does not arise.

Vegetable oil imports

3980. SHRI C. PERUMAL : Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that total vegetable oil imports of our country has been increased by 17 per cent during the current year and at the same time domestic production has been declined to 4.4 per cent ;

(b) whether it is also a fact that such decline in the current year's production has paved the way to increase the import of vegetable oils;

(c) if so, whether Government propose to take any effective measures to increase domestic production and what are the reasons for such sudden decline;

(d) whether there is any *ad hoc* Board for providing guidance and financial assistance for cultivation of vegetable oil crops in the country ; and

(e) if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA) : (a) and (b) As per data provided by the Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics (DGCIS), during the current year the import of vegetable oils (edible) (April to December, 2006) has increased by 12.17 per cent over the corresponding period of last year. The net domestic availability of edible oils in the year 2005-06 as estimated by the Directorate of Vanaspati, Vegetable Oils and Fats, was 83.16 lakh tonnes. The net availability of edible oils during 2006-07 is estimated at 72.12 lakh tonnes, showing a decline of 13.3 per cent. In order to ensure adequate supply of edible oils in the domestic market, the Government has permitted import of edible oils (excluding coconut oil) under Open General Licence (OGL).

(c) A Centrally Sponsored Integrated Scheme on Oilseeds, Pulses, Oil palm and Maize (ISOPOM) is in place from 01-04-2004 for increasing production and productivity of oilseeds in the country. Under the scheme financial assistance is provided for purchase of breeder seeds, production of foundation seeds, distribution of seed mini kits, infrastructure development, block demonstrations on improved technology, integrated pest management, weedicides, distribution of sprinkler sets and farmers training. The Budget 2007-08 announced proposals to expand the ISOPOM.

The reason for decline in production is shrinkage in area under oilseeds. This had been mainly due to decline in area under groundnut in kharif season and rapeseed and mustard in rabi season.

(d) and (e) The National Oilseeds and Vegetable Oils Development (NOVOD) Board, a body under the Department of Agriculture and Cooperation is mandated with the functions of providing technical guidance and financial assistance.